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ABSTRACT

A study explored the notion of writing as a sociocultural act in order to discover whether and how native cultural literacy and literary influences manifest themselves rhetorically and stylistically. Data were collected from 223 students in Australian grades 6 through 11, and representing three linguistic and cultural groups: Vietnamese, Arabic-speaking Lebanese, and native English speaking (NS). Each subject wrote a simple narrative bedtime story which was rated using a holistic/analytic evaluation scheme, and rhetorical and stylistic patterns. The results indicated the following: (1) stories from all three groups contain attributes of settings, character, and action, although the manner in which these are presented differs; (2) the groups place different emphases on action and event, with the Vietnamese students appearing more concerned with presenting context for their stories than did the other groups; (3) when a plot is present, the stories show characteristic beginnings and happy endings; (4) the Vietnamese prefer including the events which bring about the telling of the story in the first place; (5) the Arabic students prefer using more detailed description than the other two groups, and (6) the native speaking subjects in both grades showed the same pattern for storytelling--little introductory detail, little digression to attributes of characters or setting, little evidence of reflection on action, and a clear forward movement as the sequence of events occurs. (Tables of data are included and a 50-item reference list is appended.) (HTH)

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Writing: A Third "Language" for Second Language Learners Becoming Members of new "rhetorical communities"

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Writing: A "Third Language" for Second Language Learners Becoming Members of New "Rhetorical Communities"

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Recent research in first language writing reveals that writing is a complex cognitive and social activity. When we extend our perspective to include writing in a second language, we may also need to attend to the role that the native rhetorical and stylistic features of written discourse may have in influencing writers in their new "rhetorical communities." Thus, one of the major difficulties facing writers of both the native tongue (L1) and a second language (L2) is that they must not only learn the craft of writing at the mechanics level but also discover the rhetorical and stylistic conventions of written langauge as accepted in their target community.

The study focuses on a rhetorical and stylistic analysis of the narratives of Grade 6 and 11 Arabic (Lebanese), Vietnamese and native English-speaking students, the data for which were collected by the researcher in Sydney, Australia. Results from a focal group of 45 students are reported which indicate that in the narratives of the three groups were found certain structural and stylistic preferences in plot development that reflect cultural preferences among the three groups.

The findings have implications for both instruction and evaluation of ESL writing in the following way: in judging writing of students from other cultures, we need to consider whether that writing reflects conformity to norms of these other cultural groups as much, if not more than, ignorance of rhetorical and stylistic norms in the adopted language and culture. As with reading, we may, in writing, have to consider the impact of students' prior knowledge and literary/literacy experiences on current writing performance.

ASOTER

Writing: A Third "Language" for Second Language Learners Becoming members of new "rhetorical communities"

Introduction

Recent research in first language (L1) has revealed that writing is a complex act. As such, it may involve the interaction of a complex network of activities including thinking, intentions, linguistic operations, cognitive complexity of tasks, experiences and knowledge of the individual writers, various developmental phenomena and sociocultural contexts in which writing takes place.

When we extend our perspective to include second language (L2) writing, we also need to understand the role that cultural backgrounds in relation to literacy may have in the development of L2 literacy. The fundamental view adopted in this paper is that written discourse is a form of expression that is culturally defined and is thus describable through culturally agreed conventions. Fowler (1977, P. 125) expresses this more concretely when he states, "It (discourse) is...the system of conventions which makes possible the work and arrangements of words within the work. The systematic organization of society (including the 'rules' for writing) transcends and controls the individual, determining verbal patterns he or she can deploy or respond to. The writer can only write meaningfully within the possibilities provided by the systems of conventions which define the culture."

One of the major tasks facing both L1 and L2 writers is

that as well as learning the craft of writing, they must discover the models and rhetorical conventions accepted in their particular communities. In practice, this has to do with discovering appropriate norms of usage in relation to particular rhetorical forms. However, learning to write in most instructional contexts has meant learning the "mechanics" of the craft of writing. Norms of appropriateness in terms of rhetorical and stylistic conventions have often not been explicitly taught. Martin and Rothery (1980, 1981) in their study of secondary school writers suggest that rhetorical and stylistic conventions are often left for students to learn through a process of osmosis, and yet it is these same conventions with which we judge the writing of all students in our evaluation of their products.

In teaching writing, therefore, we are teaching values whether we admit it or not (Boehm, 1979). These values are reflected in what we find desirable in student writing, in what we deem as inappropriate or inadmissible and in which student values we choose to accept. Such value judgements are communicatively and aesthetically based, and it is through them that writing becomes a sociocultural activity.

Recent reports from the International Study of Achievement (IEA) in Written Composition (Purves, 1985) reveal that while certain structural and stylistic commonalities may be shared across cultures in writing tasks, standards of evaluation and methods of assessment, culturally specific features of discourse are nevertheless apparent in the writing products of students in

the study. This present study argues that in examining the written products of L2 writers, we will find culturally-preferred styles and culturally-preferred discourse structures related to various modes of discourse. The specific form of discourse selected for the present study is the simple narrative or story. In exploring the notion of writing as a sociocultural act, the specific intention was to discover whether and how native cultural literacy and literary influences manifest themselves rhetorically and stylistically in the writing of students from native English, Vietnamese and Arabic (Lebanese) backgrounds.

The Problem and its Background

Within the past ten years of L2 writing-related research, a shift has occurred from the earlier focus on linguistic phenomena to rhetorical and stylistic aspects of writing. Similarly, new developments have occurred in the fields of contrastive discourse analysis and contrastive rhetoric (Kaplan, 1983) in which differences in writing are examined from the perspective of description rather than prescription. Increasing interest has also developed in the possible transfer of linguistic and rhetorical features from one language to another in the written products of college students (Kaplan, 1966; Selinker, Todd Trimble and Trimble, 1976; Dehghanpisheh, 1978; Shachter and Rutherford, 1979).

A basic assumption of contrastive rhetoric is that writers may be using in the target language, linguistic, rhetorical and

stylistic features from the native language as a result of expressing habitual thought patterns and habitual styles of expression. Evidence of such transfer may occur in the ways in which topics are linked, linking of ideas from sentence to sentence (explicit or implicit), movement from the specific to the general or the converse, or in the degree of abstraction rather than concreteness. In narrative discourse, interest may center on the ways in which events are sequenced, time is used, ways in which characters are presented and their roles, the use of and function of dialogue and the distance of the writer from the action in the story as well as from the reader. Evidence that such stylistic and discourse features may vary depending on the cultural and linguistic background of the speaker, has already appeared in Tannen (1979; 1980; Chafe, 1980; Michaels, 1981; Heath, 1982) who have, however, been mostly concerned with oral discourse structures.

Until the IEA Study in the Achievement of Writing (1983) and the present study, written compositions of school-age children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds have not been used in examining the rhetorical and stylistic differences for evidence of native linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical influences. The work in contrastive rhetoric has primarily drawn on data from adult ESL compositions and on finished, edited text of other cultures (see Clyne, 1983 and Houghton and Hoey, 1983 for a review of these and other studies). The present study reflects a shift in this perspective to the view that influences from the native language may be

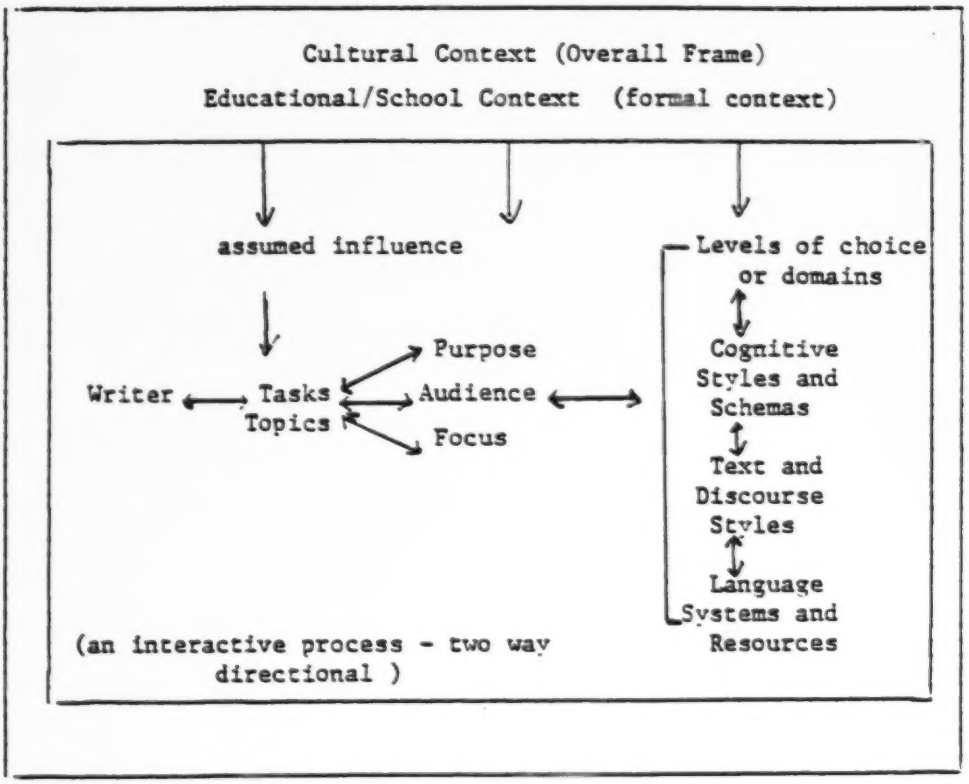
regarded as evidence of "transfer" of various rhetorical and stylistic forms in written discourse.

In order to represent the ways in which culture may influence discourse and its speakers/writers, a model is proposed in this study (see Figure 1) termed The Cultural Context Model. This model presents writers as part of an environment which influences them in all aspects of the writing task, both through schooling (the formal context) and through the whole community (the informal context).

Insert Figure 1

The model illustrates the process of influence as an interactive one. Writers may choose topics and tasks but those topics and tasks may not necessarily occur in other cultures. They are therefore as much a product of a particular culture as the writers themselves. Similarly, writers may select to write for particular audiences and have particular foci in mind for those audiences. However, these audiences are also a product of the same culture (although, it must be stressed that the more public the writing, the greater the likelihood that the product will be read by others in different cultures). By extension, the cognitive styles, the knowledge we have of the world, the content of our writing and thinking (schemata), the text and discourse styles and the language systems and resources available to writers are also products of the same culture as much as the writers themselves. More generally, the cultural

Figure 1: Culture Context Model



context will influence writers through its definition of cognitive styles and the schemata acquired by its participants, through the conventions of text and discourse styles, and also through the range of linguistic and discourse resources available to create text (Kaplan, 1966; Markova, 1979; Scribner and Cole, 1981).

In addressing the influence of native stylistic and rhetorical discourse on the writing of ESL students, we acknowledge that ESL writers may, therefore, adopt different modes of structuring thought. Kaplan (1966) has argued that logic is "culture specific"; Grimshaw (1973) sees culture and language as outcomes of a deeper level of perception which he calls "weltanschauung"; Leech (1976) claims that our inner perception of the world has actually been greatly influenced by verbal categories to describe. As pertinent, Spiro (1980) has suggested that a lack of familiarity with structures of various kinds in written modes (e.g., text, genre structures) and/or a lack of familiarity with content, will imply lack of available schemata for producing various kinds of text. However, the degree to which two or more cultures exhibit such differences is yet to be determined and may vary according to the relatedness of the cultures and languages involved.

Thus, errors that ESL writers make in writing, may not only reflect the levels of acquired competence in L2 writing but also represent evidence of ways in which the ESL writer is trying to match new rhetorical and discourse schemata to old, ways in which the writer is expressing habitual thought patterns while

using new forms of expression both at the sentence and at the larger text levels of expression.

Setting for the Study

The data for the study were collected in Sydney, Australia in the period February - May, 1984. The total of 223 students in the study represent three language and cultural groups at Grades 6 and 11 levels of schooling from eight schools in the Sydney metropolitan region. These groups are Vietnamese, Arabic-speaking Lebanese and native English-speaking students. From within the larger sample of 223 students, 26 volunteer students form a focal group for which intensive analysis of the compositions was carried out. For these 26 students, additional data was also collected to provide more insight into the special literacy problems of the L2 writer in school contexts. A narrative task - a simple bedtime story - was used as the writing task and the focus for the analyses.

Subjects and the Task

Of the 223 students from two grades and three linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Arabic/Lebanese, Vietnamese and English), the Vietnamese students have lived in Australia for a minimum of one year to a maximum of five years (the older students in the main, having lived in Australia for 3-5 years and the younger for 1-3 years). The Arabic students were all born in Australia with the one exception being a student who arrived in the country at the age of 3. However, all of these

students first acquired their native tongue and then learned English when they reached school. Teachers of all students in the study ensured that those who participated were regarded as "adequately proficient writers" and had had a consistent record of writing in English in their schools, and had experience writing essay tasks within the normal time limits of a school period (i.e., 40 minutes).

The students in both Grades 6 and 11 were given a narrative task -- a bedtime story to a child younger than the writer (Little, 1975). The narrative is a form familiar to all children and Little's index of difficulty of the task (moderately low level of difficulty) made the task a suitable one for a study which includes both native and nonnative writers). All students wrote the narrative in class time, with the researcher present for a period of approximately 40 minutes.

Methods of Analysis

All 223 compositions were rated using the IEA scoring scheme which will be described in the following section. 26 compositions (comprising a focal group for further data collection and in depth analysis) and an additional 19 randomly selected compositions from the total 223, were further analysed for rhetorical and stylistic patterns. Space constraints limit the scope of this paper to including only a detailed description of the main focus in analysis, the "storygraph" and the relationship of the quality ratings of the narratives to the patterns found in the storygraph.

The storygraph analysis was designed to determine gross structures of plot and story development, use of features such as setting and introduction of characters, amount of information allocated to description as distinct from plot information and inclusion of information which is not typical of English narratives. In addition, the compositions of the 45 students were analysed for word counts of various lexico-grammatical types (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, articles, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions as well as total word counts to determine to what degree differences may be attributed to greater length of compositions and linguistic phenomena related to and familarity with the use of English in written form.

Vocabulary Types and Length of Compositions

Little variation in the total word count (Table 1) was found across the three groups. Variation in the percentage of various lexical categories (principally, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions) was found among the Vietnamese and Arabic students which are, in part, L1 (first language) effects. Grade 6 Arabic students show a considerably higher percentage of coordinating conjunctions in their stories which may reflect Kaplan's (1966) finding of this linguistic form as more common among Arabic students in their writing.

Insert Table 1

Table 1 : percentage of total words of vocabulary items in each group

Group	TWDS	V	N	PN	ADJ	ADV	CONJ	ART	PREP
NSE	3487	19.92	19.82	9.18	7.25	5.62	6.68	7.71	9.80
ARABIC	3620	19.94	17.54	13.32	6.49	4.97	9.01	8.59	9.89
VIETNAMESE	3223	21.25	18.62	13.59	7.54	5.31	7.25	7.73	6.45

Remarks: Proper Nouns and adjectives counted as nouns and adjectives

Relative pronouns excluded - only personal, possessive, reflexive counted

Adverbs and Conjunctions - counted as such according to function in the context..

Prepositions - only those counted which were not part of the verb unit (e.g. pick up)

Articles - include both definite and indefinite articles

Verbs - since propositional units (for storygram) are based on verb units, these are the same number as propositional units .

Quality Ratings of the Compositions

The Evaluation Scale

The IEA (1983) holistic/analytic evaluation scheme was used to rate the compositions according to how effectively they conformed with English narrative conventions. The scheme (illustrated in Table 2) allows for the evaluation of writing which required raters to focus on a number of categories to the exclusion of others (as far as this is possible to do). For example, mechanics occupies a separate category, and it was felt that such a scale would therefore not disadvantage the nonnative students (NNS) as other scales may. The ratings for the narrative include the following main categories: A: Quality and Scope of Content B: Organization and Presentation of Content C: Style and Form D: Mechanics E: The Affective Response of the Raters. A scale of 1(Low) - 5(High) was used for rating in each of the items for each category.

The Raters

Three raters rated all 223 compositions. Two raters have had experience with the IEA scoring scheme and are trained ESL teachers and one has had extensive experience in large-scale evaluation of compositions at the secondary school level. A training session in the use of the scoring scheme was carried out particularly to draw the attention of the raters for the need to separate their evaluation of rhetorical structure and content from that of mechanics. The main goal of using such an

evaluation was to discover how successfully the nonnative writers were perceived by the raters as observing the conventions of English narrative writing.

Results of the Ratings of the Compositions

In the scoring scheme, items 1-10 consist of features related to narrative organization, technique, style and mechanics. Items 11 and 12 show the affective responses of the raters to the compositions. Using a covariance matrix and a reliability correlation matrix, the reliability of the raters was computed for each item (Table 2) in the five main categories. The unadjusted ratings given by each of the three raters on each item in the scoring scheme comprise the data used to determine the reliability coefficient. The range of reliability for all compositions on items 1-10 was from .75 to .88 and for items 11-12 from .63 to .69. The means and standard deviations on each item according to total and focal groups, and grade and language groups are also shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2

According to the range of means in the total and focal groups on each item, the focal group students generally appeared to write better stories compared with other students in the total group (Table 2). In explanation of this pattern, attention is drawn to the fact that the focal group were all volunteers for the additional data collected. One might suggest, therefore,

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Quality Ratings: Total and Focal Groups

Groups			CATEGORY A			CATEGORY B			CATEGORY C		CATEGORY D		CATEGORY E		
			Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10	Item 11	Item 12	All Items
Total Group	Gr 11	Mean	3.34	3.28	3.36	3.58	3.11	3.16	3.20	3.12	2.92	2.70	2.24	2.19	3.01
		SD	1.03	1.07	1.08	1.02	1.06	1.01	.97	.96	.93	.90	1.11	1.12	1.02
	Gr 6	Mean	2.30	2.07	2.14	2.43	2.00	2.03	2.04	2.02	1.80	1.69	1.56	1.56	1.97
		SD	1.03	1.05	1.07	1.15	1.01	.99	1.01	.98	.79	.71	.91	.88	.97
Focal Group	Gr 11	Mean	3.95	3.72	3.87	3.79	3.38	3.59	3.49	3.56	3.15	2.82	2.28	2.23	3.32
		SD	.86	1.33	1.29	1.25	1.49	1.25	.95	.77	.85	.74	.59	.61	.95
	Gr 6	Mean	3.00	2.85	2.82	3.03	2.90	2.77	2.69	2.64	2.10	1.90	1.56	1.67	2.49
		SD	.84	.93	.92	1.07	1.03	1.04	1.00	.93	.82	.66	.39	.33	.77
FG English	Gr 11	Mean	4.50	4.50	4.75	4.50	4.50	4.42	4.00	4.17	3.75	3.25	2.83	2.75	3.99
		SD	.58	.58	.32	.58	.58	.50	.82	.69	.50	.50	.19	.32	.44
	Gr 6	Mean	3.27	3.27	3.07	3.53	3.13	3.13	3.27	3.07	2.53	2.07	1.87	1.80	2.83
		SD	.72	.72	.60	.84	.73	1.10	.83	.72	.90	.68	.18	.30	.64
FG Arabic	Gr 11	Mean	3.92	3.67	3.75	3.83	3.42	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.25	2.92	2.17	2.08	3.29
		SD	1.13	1.83	1.66	1.50	1.73	1.35	.88	.88	.96	.96	.43	.57	1.13
	Gr 6	Mean	2.25	1.92	1.92	1.92	2.17	1.83	1.58	1.58	1.33	1.33	1.25	1.47	1.71
		SD	.88	.92	.92	.92	1.17	.88	.50	.50	.47	.47	.32	.32	.60
FG Vietnamese															
	Gr 11	Mean	3.53	3.13	3.27	3.20	2.47	3.00	3.07	3.13	2.60	2.40	1.93	1.93	2.81
		SD	.69	1.22	1.26	1.35	1.37	1.41	1.06	.51	.72	.60	.64	.64	.90
	Gr 6	Mean	3.42	3.25	3.42	3.50	3.33	3.25	3.08	3.17	2.33	2.25	1.50	1.75	2.85
		SD	.88	.92	.92	.92	1.17	.88	.50	.50	.47	.47	.32	.32	.51
Reliability Coefficients			.83	.81	.80	.75	.78	.81	.85	.85	.88	.86	.63	.69	

that their higher quality ratings is a reflection of their greater interest and enthusiasm in carrying out the task. The results are grouped according to grade and language background.

The most significant items in relation to the subsequent analyses were those which dealt with the development of the narrative situation or event, the presentation of characters, the focus on situation or event and the narrative structure. When "mechanics" are separated out in evaluation, the nonnative students could score well despite their somewhat limited English profiency. Lower scores on these items, however, reflect degrees to which the raters perceived the students' writing as conforming with English narrative conventions. The less proficient writers of English (whether L1 or L2) generally scored in the lower ranges in the "style" and "mechanics" categories. Discussion of the results follows.

Summary of the Rating Findings

In general, the NS Grade 11 students, and the NS Grade 6 students, appear to understand the conventions of narrative writing as they have been exposed to them in reading and as they have been taught to observe them through writing experiences in the school. This also appears to be true for the Grade 11 Arabic students all but one of whom were educated in Australia.

The "ideal" model was drawn from a variety of sources, among them Wilkinson et al (1980), Applebee (1978) Vandergrift (1980). In general terms, this means that a "good" bedtime story will generally have the conventional beginning, ("Once upon a

time..."), a focus on action and event, one main character and possibly an agent which brings about some kind of simple complication. The story will probably have a crisis or build up of action and will have an ending. In addition, the raters also considered the appropriateness of the style and content of the story, the audience having been specified as a child younger than the writer.

Discussion of Results

A1: Presentation of Events. Scores for the Grade 6 and 11 Vietnamese students in this category (dealing with presentation and development of the situation or event) were in the 2-4 range with the mean rating for this item being 3.53 on the 5 point scale. Apart from one student, the Grade 11 Arabic students scored in the 3-5 range in this category and the Grade 6 Arabic students in the 1-3 range. The latter appeared to be writing recounts (Martin and Rothery, 1980,1981; Applebee, 1978) rather than stories. In contrast, the NS Grade 11 students scored in the 4-5 range and the NS Grade 6 students in the 2-4 range, reflecting the raters' views that these students had generally met the criteria for narrative presentation of events.

A2: Presentation of Character. The group which scored highest in this item was the NS Grade 11 group in the 4-5 range with the mean score for the item being 4.50. The Grade 6 Arabic group scored in the range of 1-3, the lowest for this item. The raters felt that the Vietnamese students had a better grasp of character presentation with the exception of two students who had not provided sufficient information in their stories about

the characters -- in part, an artefact of their story structure.

B4: Focus on Topic, Development of Events. Other than the Grade 6 Arabic group all students in the other groups scored in the 2-5 range for this item, the overall means for the Focal Group Grade 6 students being 3.03 and 3.37 respectively. The NS Grade 11 students and one of the Arabic Grade 11 students scored mostly 4 and 5 on this item.

B5: Narrative Structure. This item is perhaps the most important in that it relates most directly to the storygraph analysis and to the stylistic analysis. The range of scores gained reflects the structuring of the stories as analysed in the storygraph. High scores reflect close conformity with a well-developed plot. In the focal group, the Grade 11 mean for this item was 3.38 and for the Grade 6 students, 2.90. The Grade 11 Vietnamese students scored in the 1-3 range. The pattern in these compositions was to have a lengthy introductory description (in effect, a story about a story) and many did not complete the story "proper." A typical rater response was that these compositions were close to being "off topic."

The results of the Grade 6 Vietnamese students were comparable with the NS students on this item, their range being 2-4 and their mean 3.33. Three of these students, however, wrote obvious derivatives of English stories (e.g., two variations of Jack and the Beanstalk and one of Peter Rabbit). All of these students have had regular exposure to English narratives since they began schooling in Australia and appear to have already become familiar with the conventions of "good story writing" in

English.

All of the Grade 6 Arabic students scored in the 1-3 range for this item. In explanation of this occurrence, the Arabic students were generally not regarded by their teachers, as being "good writers." All have received additional ESL instruction up to the time of data collection since they began school in Kindergarten. Their experiences with reading and writing in English are not extensive either in school or in the home.

The NS Grade 11 students scored in the 3-5 range for this item. All have had extensive experience reading stories throughout childhood both in the home and in the school as have the Grade 6 NS students. The latter, however, scored in the 2-4 range. To some extent, this result is explained by the fact that the Grade 6 students tended to write forms of "recounts" as did the Grade 6 Arabic students. Their proficiency ratings in writing, as noted by their teachers, indicate that they are "middle-of-the range" students.

Students who did not complete their compositions were mostly in the Vietnamese group. Again, raters penalised such students by regarding their stories as unfinished. The Vietnamese students, however, spent a great deal of time on the "setting" for the story or as termed in the storygraph, the "story about story." Their stories therefore, were not so much meandering, as evolving and the time constraints we place on students in writing, do not seem to accommodate their particular rhetorical style. When we consider their stories in this light, the problem appears to lie with the conditions under which

students write rather than in the writers themselves. Further discussion of the significance of this factor as an indication of possible transfer of story-telling forms from the native culture will follow in the discussion of the storygraph analysis and results.

Storygraph Analysis: Plotting the Plot

Storygrammar methodology, although contemplated, was not the most appropriate approach for tracking the sequences in the students' narratives. However, certain aspects of the storygrammar approach were adapted (e.g., the segmentation of information in the stories according to "propositional units" as used by Warren, Nicholas and Trabasso, 1979) and subsequently applied. An additional consideration was the content of the stories themselves and thus a method that was flexible was developed.

Four categories comprise the storygraph (see Figure 2):

A: Story about story (functioning as a context within which another tale is told).

B: Setting (functioning as location in time and space and indicating where main characters appear in the story).

C: Scene (attributional features of setting, characters and aspects such as thought and and emotion ÄBurke, 1945; Hymes, 1974ü). In literary works, attributional features of setting are often instruments in the creation of mood and atmosphere and may also function as indicators of a character's inner

state. Thus, where attributional features of these kinds appeared in the students' stories, they were coded as "scene."

D: Plot (information which is related to the development of action and event through linear progression or flashback sequences or a series of complications or other methods of developing action).

Segmentation of the Stories: Propositional Units

Adapted from the methods used by Stein and Glenn (1979) and Warren, Nicholas and Trabasso (1979), propositional units proved to be suitable for dividing text of student writers into meaningful units and overcame the problems of ambiguous boundaries between sentences and sometimes, of T-Units. For example, co-ordinating conjunctions as used by the students (especially nonnative students) did not always seem to signal co-ordination in the conventional sense. It was not always clear from the data that "and" was used between clausal units that it, in fact, signalled the commencement of another T-Unit.

A brief description of how the propositional units were decided upon follows. A verb is the nucleus of a propositional unit. Where a verb phrase consisted of two verbs (e.g., start to tell) it was broken into two verbs with deleted arguments implied). In coding, propositional units may be "fused" (the main action being described is not completed by one unit alone. Such fused propositional units are shown thus - 1-4). All propositional units are numbered from (1) as are sentences where writers indicated these through punctuation. Propositional units are placed at the top of the chart in the appropriate sections

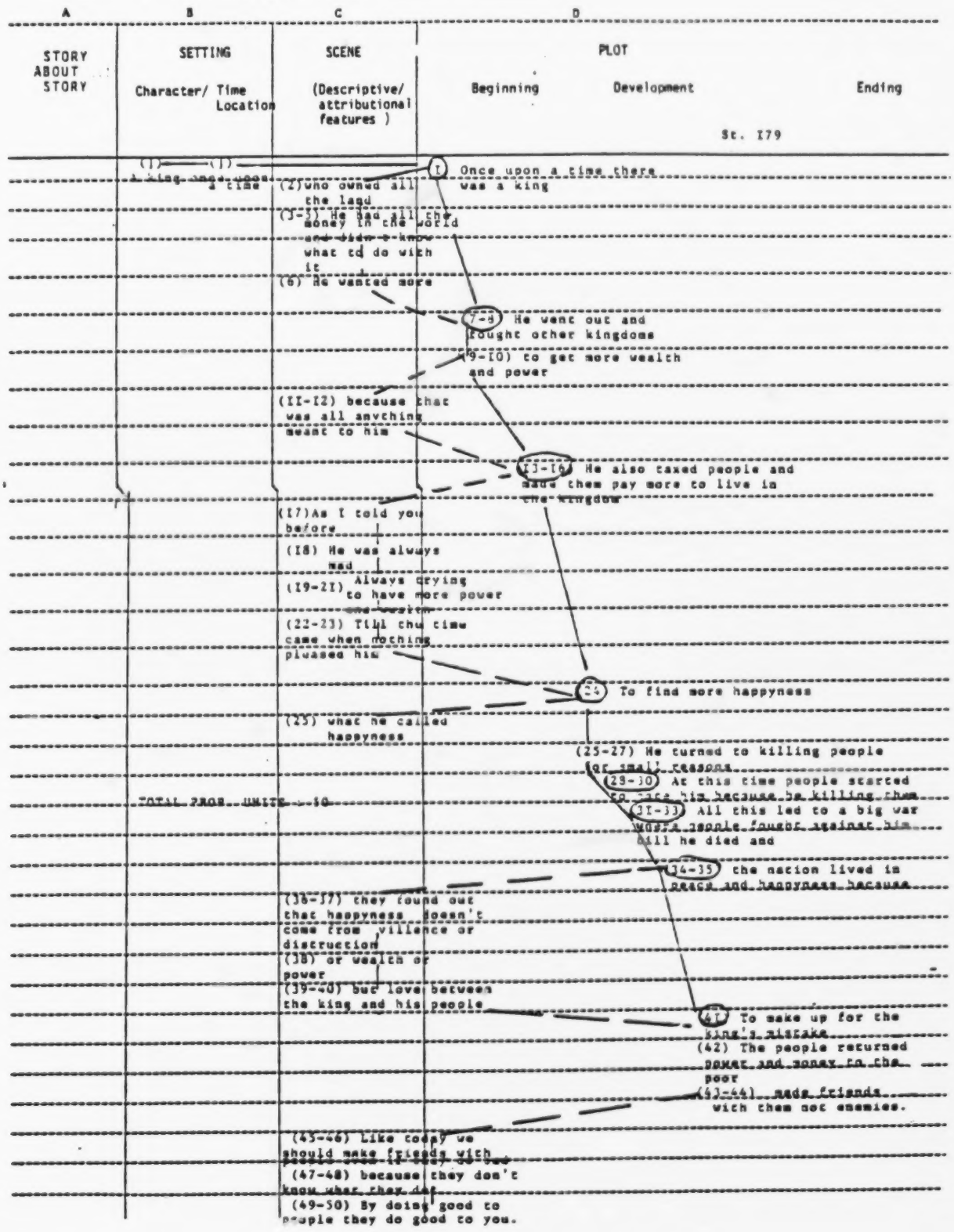
and the coding proceeded both across (horizontally) and from top to bottom of the chart (see Figure 2, for a sample analysis).

Propositional units may serve multiple functions in the text - i.e., convey information related to character (scene) as well as plot or setting. This is shown as double coding. All propositional units were counted and proportions of units in any one section indicate in which sections writers concentrated their information. The plot-line reveals where the story took a new turn and this is indicated by a circled propositional unit. For tracking propositional units, the plot line is shown in heavy broken lines and the relationship between units within turns shown in light, unbroken lines which may zig-zag across the chart.

The storygraph is not designed to describe all the details of the stylistic features of the student's compositions. Rather, it is a means of plotting the structural features of the story and, thereby, indicates the structural patterns that appear to characterize the writing of different groups of students. The primary functions of the storygraph are to: indicate the sequence of story events through simple visual means and to allocate information in the stories to various "macro" categories which will reflect conventional story structure in English.

Insert Figure 2

Figure 2 Sample Storygraph Analysis


A
B
C
D
STORY ABOUT STORY
SETTING
Character/ Time Location
SCENE
(Descriptive/ attributional features)
PLOT
Beginning
Development
Ending
St. I79
(1) A king once upon a time
(2) who owned all the land
(3-4) He had all the money in the world and didn't know what to do with it
(6) He wanted more
I Once upon a time there was a king
(7-8) He went out and fought other kingdoms
(9-10) to get more wealth and power
(11-12) because that was all anything meant to him
(13-16) He also taxed people and made them pay more to live in the kingdom
(17) As I told you before
(18) He was always mad
(19-21) Always trying to have more power and wealth
(22-23) Till the time came when nothing pleased him
24 To find more happyness
(25) what he called happyness
(25-27) He turned to killing people for small reasons
(28-30) At this time people started to hate him because he killing them
(31-33) All this led to a big war where people fought against him
Till he died and
34-35 the nation lived in peace and happyness because
TOTAL PROB. UNITS 50
(36-37) they found out that happyness doesn't come from villence or distruction
(38) or wealth or power
(39-40) but love between the king and his people
41 To make up for the king's mistake
(42) The people returned power and money to the poor
(43-44) made friends with them not enemies.
(45-46) Like today we should make friends with people need it not to be
(47-48) because they don't know what they do
(49-50) By doing good to people they do good to you.

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General Findings and Discussion

The findings, based on percentage distributions of propositional units in the storygraphs (Table 3), may be summarized as follows. First, all three groups have stories that contain setting, attributes of setting, character and action although the manner in which these are presented, differ in varying degrees. Second, the three groups place different emphases on action and event with the Vietnamese students appearing to be more concerned with presenting a context for their stories than either the Arabic or NS students. Third, when plot is present in the conventional sense, all of the stories show characteristic beginnings (e.g., "Once upon a time..") and most have happy endings. The model stories referred to in the study (Robertson, 1968;a Vietnamese informant) show some differences in this respect. Fourth, the Vietnamese group appears to show a preference for interaction the events which bring about the telling of the story in the first place. Finally, the Arabic students show a preference for using more detailed description (attributional features coded "scene").

Most strikingly, the NS group, irrespective of grade level, show the same pattern for storytelling (see Table 3). That is, little detail is evident to serve as introduction to the story; the plot is begun almost immediately; there is little digression to attributes of characters or setting; there is little evidence of reflection on action; and a clear forward movement of the sequence of events occurs. Of the three groups, the NS group showed the least divergence within the group itself in

allocating information to the storygraph categories.

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of propositional units in the four categories for each of the groups and the relationship that these allocations appear to have with the quality ratings independently given to the compositions.

Insert Table 3

Similar patterns in story structure and content appeared among the NS group as a whole and the Grade 11 Arabic students. In contrast, the Grade 6 and 11 Vietnamese students consistently show a greater allocation of time and location for the telling of the story and a greater focus on the attributional features of characters (especially with respect to emotional and mental processes of characters. Three Grade 6 Vietnamese students did not follow this pattern and as stated earlier in the discussion of quality ratings, these students wrote clear derivations of English-type stories.

To some extent one may argue that the divergent patterns of most of the Vietnamese students and the Grade 6 Arabic students, reflect their lack of familiarity with story-writing conventions in English as these are customarily taught to them in schools and, possibly, acquired through reading. However, in this sense, their structures do indicate also structures that may be derived from elsewhere (other models). Various Vietnamese narratives drawn on for the study, reveal as do Japanese stories (Matsuyama, 1983) that the Vietnamese stories appear to be less

Table 3

Means (%) of Propositional units in Storygraph Categories for Each Group of Students related to Average Range of Quality Rating Scores on Selected Items

Group	Storygraph Categories				Narrative Rating Scores Average of Rater Scores			
	A	B	C	D	A1	A2	B1	B2
Vietnamese (T)	33.84	5.98	20.55	45.78				
Grade 6	26.34	6.58	17.60	54.88	3-4	2-4	2-4	2-4
Grade 11	42.42	5.60	23.92	35.36	1-4	1-3	1-4	1-3
Arabic (T)	15.45	5.31	17.61	68.62				
Grade 6	20.65	4.90	5.97	72.75	1-3	1-3	2-4	2-3
Grade 11	10.90	5.66	27.90	65.04	3-5	2-5	2-4	2-4
NS English (T)	3.27	7.32	16.20	81.82				
Grade 6	4.26	7.12	16.63	81.26	2-4	2-4	3-4	3-4
Grade 11	2.14	7.53	16.88	82.45	3-5	3-5	3-5	3-5

Note: Storygraph Categories A,B,C,D represent "Story about Story"; Setting; Scene (Description, attributes, states of mind, etc.); and, Plot Line.

Categories for Narrative Rating Scores A1, A2, B1, B2 represent Development of Situation/Event; Presentation of Characters; Focus on Topic; and, Development of Narrative Structure (including climax).

goal-oriented and, hence, less focused on plot than the typical English story. In the Vietnamese stories consulted and according to the Vietnamese informants, a greater emphasis appears to be placed on relationships among the participants in the telling of the story situation, and on the inner states of characters within the story. The Vietnamese students, in particular, also drew more heavily on dialogue in their stories and the dialogue components did not include information which in general, forwarded the action of the story but was reflective or attributive in nature.

The Grade 6 Arabic students were a problematic group in this study in that they were, on the whole, regarded as weaker writers and, through additional data collected for the focal group, appear to have had considerably less exposure to literary forms both in their native language and in English. Consequently, their stories do not, it seems, reflect so much a cultural influence in structure, as a limited proficiency with writing in general. The Grade 11 Arabic students, although having been exposed to English literary forms for most of their school lives, nevertheless appear to have more information in the attributional category (Scene) which, according to the models of Arabic stories used as comparative sources, appears to be a feature of Arabic literary style.

The Relationship of the Quality Ratings to the Storygraph Results

The Grade 11 NS students may be considered as indicating the "narrative norm" group where these students achieved in the

4-5 range in the quality ratings. Where the raters gave higher scores for the specific narrative subcategories, they were, in effect, indicating their views that the stories were "good narratives."

The significance of the agreement between the analysis in the storygraph and the ratings lies in the following. When the writing of these students is checked, evaluated, assessed by teachers in an English-speaking community such as the one the students are members of, it will be responded to in terms of the linguistic and literary norms of that community. This means that narrative compositions will be judged as good or bad according to the accepted notions of narrative structure and development in that community. Students who do not conform to those norms will be less likely to be evaluated highly and this is, in fact, reflected in the ratings given to the students.

However, and more significantly, the rationale for such low ratings has been that students show poor organisation, poor syntactic structure, limited vocabulary -- i.e., it is a "mechanics" oriented structure that we apply to student writing in general. Structure is admittedly considered but again, this is in terms of what is not done rather than on what is done.

A storygraph analysis such as the one applied in this study indicates that ESL compositions may not "lack structure," but rather demonstrate "different structures." Stories in this study which were rated on the lower end of the scale were those which contained lengthy digressions, contained the category "story about story," as well as those which were in the main,

"recounts." Stories which scored on the upper end of the scale were those in which the writer clearly presented the situation and the characters involved, developed the situation along action-based lines and concluded the situation in an appropriate way for younger children - i.e., the "happy ending."

The data suggest that in judging the writing of students from other cultures (and subcultures) and other linguistic backgrounds, we need to consider whether that writing reflects conformity to norms of other cultural communities or ignorance of writing norms in the adopted language and culture.

The additional analyses carried out on the data (a style vectors rating, a detailed stylistic analysis under the categories of plot, setting, characterization, point of view, and stylistic use of language, a semantic analysis of verbs based on Chafe (1970) and Longacre (1976, 1983) are not included in this report of the study but described in detail elsewhere (Soter, 1985). They are alluded to only to indicate that the findings in the storygraph are confirmable through more detailed stylistic and linguistic analysis and that these findings are clearly related to structural rhetorical patterns.

Conclusion

This study is an investigative step in attempting to apply methods of analysis to student writers which have customarily been reserved for what we might call "expert text." One of the values in doing this (i.e., evaluating the writing from the point of view of "rhetoric" rather than a mechanics-content

oriented assessment perspective) is that through this we discover the nature of "what is there" rather than "what is not there." We also discover to what extent we have taken our own rhetorical models for granted, and in the process of simple analysis, can further discover to what extent these influence our evaluation and assessment procedures and standards. Those standards are part of any culture and any educational system and are not intrinsically invalid. However, if accepted unthinkingly, they may result in our approaching the writing of ESL students from an errors' perspective and without the understanding of where these "errors" may be coming from.

One of the main limitations of the study is that the ESL students were not able to write the compositions both in English and in their native languages, although they had been offered the possibility of doing so. Had they done so, clearer patterns of stylistic and rhetorical characteristics in the stories may have been observed. A further limitation occurs in the task dimensions. Time limits, while reflecting the real-school contexts for writing, prevented some of the the Vietnamese students in particular from completing their narratives. Thus, unwittingly, further information about differences in writing styles may be excluded. Furthermore, in setting writing tasks, we may also confound task effects with writer effects. The present study specified an audience younger than the writer of the story, and, consequently, some students may have been encouraged to use "oral forms" which are more typical in the "bedtime story-telling situation."

Despite these limitations, the study has demonstrated in a limited way, we may have to consider that in writing, as in reading, the impact of a student's prior knowledge of literacy and literary experiences on his/her current experiences and on his/her current writing performance. Such acknowledgement is already being accorded in the field of ESL reading (Carrell, 1983) but is yet to have its place in the field of ESL writing.

Using rhetorical descriptors which are typically concerned with aspects such as method of narration, plot development, characterization, point of view and theme in the analysis of writing styles would also address the sociolinguistic perspective on writing. Such a perspective acknowledges that among the factors influencing the form and content of a particular kind of text is the nature of the rhetorical community in which that text is written (Purves, 1985). In the domain of literacy, the degrees to which writers observe rhetorical conventions may, therefore, reveal the extent to which writers are "acculturated" (i.e., socialized into a target community) as well as "enculturated" (i.e., socialized according to the conventions of the native culture).

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